

PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

January 25, 1952

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE US-UK-FRENCH DISARMAMENT PROPOSAL IN THE UNITED NATIONSPreliminary Study Prepared by the Staff for the Information of the BoardI. The Problem

To prepare a preliminary evaluation of the psychological effectiveness of the US-UK-French disarmament proposal in the current session of the United Nations General Assembly.

II. Conclusions

1. The permanence of the Disarmament Commission and its present terms of reference, viewed as a sound foundation for eventual reduction of armaments, depends on whether effective world opinion can be convinced that steady progress toward actual disarmament is possible within this framework.

2. Although follow-up efforts may help to produce a change in the Soviets' attitude, their reaction thus far gives no sign of increased readiness to relax tensions or to settle the armaments question or any other major issue. They appear to interpret the Tripartite proposal as an act of psychological warfare, not as evidence of Western peaceful intentions.

3. The disarmament proceedings were substantially effective in reassuring European opinion that the U.S. sincerely seeks security through reducing the arms burden; but a vocal minority, noting present world tensions and some harsh statements by U.S. representatives, concluded that the proposal was insincere.

4. A substantial beginning has been made in depriving the Soviets of their near-monopoly on "peace" propaganda. However, Soviet psychological tactics on the armaments question benefit by a simple approach, and one of our biggest problems of psychological tactics is to explain our complex proposals with dramatic effect. An important aspect of this problem, the need to nullify the terror value of Soviet atomic propaganda, has been partly but by no means fully solved by the joining of atomic and

conventional weapons in a single package.

5. The appeal of the proposal was appreciable in areas less directly involved in the cold war (such as the Near East, India, and Latin America) but was limited by basic skepticism about the great power conflict; by a tendency in many such countries to be preoccupied with their own immediate affairs; and by U.S. unwillingness at this time to see the disarmament question connected in the United Nations with the concept of transferring economic resources from arms to peaceful economic development.

6. We have thus far successfully avoided the danger of giving the impression that the issue of global war or peace depends on the immediate course of the disarmament proceedings.

7. We should continue to present the disarmament proposal as a steady, long-range effort to establish a basis for eventual disarmament when settlement of other issues and consequent relaxation of world tensions permits. This approach appears essential in order to give further proof of our sincerity without committing ourselves psychologically to achieve early agreement at the expense of a fully dependable plan.

8. The defensive character of the Soviet refusal to accept genuine inspection and other safeguards can be exploited psychologically to gain acceptance for this aspect of the Western plan and to show the consequent necessity for a relaxation of the iron curtain. While actual penetration of the iron curtain through inspection seems most unlikely in the present atmosphere, it might be worth while with this end in view to explore the possibility of agreement on limited inspection without any prior commitment to disarm.

III. Discussion

This discussion is organized in terms of broad opportunities and dangers inherent in the disarmament proposal, with comments in each case as to the degree of success which appears to have been attained, or to be attainable, in exploiting the opportunities and averting the dangers.

A. Opportunities

1. To establish firmly a groundwork of principles and procedures for dependable world disarmament, on a

anticipation of material progress toward disarmament

when and if the world atmosphere becomes favorable.

Comment: This opportunity was exploited psychologically to a significant extent by the creation of the Disarmament Commission with terms of reference substantially the same as those proposed in the original resolution. This step had the effect of fixing the United Nations as the proper forum for future action on disarmament and providing a visible entity (the Commission), to which the Soviets felt obliged to adhere despite their opposition on the issues, and to which the world will look for continuing efforts within the established terms of reference. The note of sincere purpose in the President's November 7 address, and the clarity of Secretary Acheson's detailed presentation before the Political Committee on November 19, were both effective in creating a general attitude of readiness (except in the Soviet bloc) to find substantial merit in the Tripartite proposal. However, in view of the keen interest and earnest hopes displayed in a great body of early press comment on the proposal, it seems likely that the groundwork which has been laid depends for its permanence on the degree to which great-power agreement to build on that groundwork is viewed as a realistic possibility. Continued great-power disagreement over two years or more might well force liquidation of the Commission or a shift to terms of reference less consonant with U.S. strategic interests.

It would be unrealistic to evaluate the benefit derived from the General Assembly's action in isolation from two major factors in world public opinion. The first is an apparently almost universal expectation that no substantial progress will be made on disarmament while East-West tensions remain at their present pitch. This expectation was made explicit by the demonstration in the General Assembly debates that great-power hostility is as firm on this specific issue as it is on other world problems. The second factor is a widespread longing for a quick and simple solution, a consequence of which is a lack of sympathy or understanding in many quarters (particularly India and other non-European countries but also in Europe to a lesser degree) for the Western insistence on elaborate safeguards.

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2. By giving the Soviets new evidence of U.S. peaceful intentions, to promote a favorable atmosphere for eventual settlement of major issues, and to moderate any conviction they may hold that the U.S. has aggressive designs.

Comment: While the Tripartite proposal may be viewed as a useful means of testing out the Soviet attitude on a possible relaxation of tensions, the results indicate that Soviet distrust of U.S. intentions was running too deep to be reduced in the short run by this or any other means. All Soviet and satellite propaganda treatment of the Tripartite resolution, both domestic and international, including speeches and statements in the General Assembly, has been dominated by the theme that the proposal was designed to mask U.S. aggressive intentions, to postpone forever the prohibition of the atomic bomb, etc. The minor theme of reasonableness (as in the Soviet magazine "News," the Paris Communist "Liberation," etc., and in the few concessions made by Vishinsky) was no more prominent than would seem necessary to avoid alienating Soviet sympathizers and wishful thinkers. Since the disarmament proposal was first made, Soviet policy has shown no tendency toward settlement of any outstanding issue, and Soviet propaganda on other subjects has been, if anything, increasingly harsh with new prominence given to the "American subversion" theme and to supposed U.S. aggressive intentions in Southeast Asia.

However, nothing in the above facts would seem to negate the possibility that a sustained follow-up of the Tripartite proposal may make a significant psychological contribution to the eventual moderating of the Soviet attitude.

3. To convince our NATO partners and other friends that we are doing everything possible to attain peace and security by the route of disarmament and relaxation of tensions.

Comment: Preliminary study of reactions in the General Assembly and foreign press opinion suggests that a qualified but nevertheless

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substantial success has been attained up to date. Formal support for the Tripartite position in the General Assembly has been impressive throughout among delegations traditionally friendly to the United States, including such a technically neutral country as Sweden. European press opinion appears to have leaned strongly toward the view that the United States is sincere in its proposal; although a significant and vocal minority in Europe appraised the move as purely propagandistic. (This division of views was also evident in the press of such neutral countries as India, but there the negative appraisal tended to predominate.) The negative view stemmed in some cases from a conviction that the timing of the proposal was inappropriate since serious progress on disarmament is impossible now because of world tensions.

In other cases, among those inclined to hope that genuine Western good will might even now close the breach, there was a suspicion that the United States was too fundamentally distrustful of the Soviets to make a sincere effort and was merely going through the motions in an attempt to appease world opinion. This latter attitude was occasionally reinforced by what these observers considered unnecessarily sharp expressions of hostility to the USSR by American spokesmen, occasional tendencies to reject Soviet views too quickly and categorically, and the conspicuous coincidence of Secretary Acheson's departure for the Rome NATO meeting. However, such adverse reactions were offset to a considerable extent by the excessive violence of Vishinsky's opening speech and other evidences of Soviet intransigence, which were widely condemned.

4. To convince nations less directly involved in the cold war that we are doing all we can to achieve a peaceful world in which the threat of global war is removed and the economic development so many of them seek can receive greater emphasis.

Comment: The material at hand (confined to India with some fragmentary material from Latin America and other areas) suggests the tentative conclusion that some progress was made, by the mere fact of

the Tripartite proposal, in moderating the balance of opinion, especially in India, as to the U.S. desire to achieve a stable and secure world. The general tone of Indian press opinion (which gave very prominent attention to the proceedings) was one of skepticism and increasing pessimism as to the possibility of progress; but in the wide range of views and analyses coming from India a considerable body of opinion appeared to assign the major blame for failure to the Soviets, and found real merit in the Tripartite approach. Solid Latin American support for the Tripartite resolution (Argentina excepted) suggests at least an equally favorable view in that area. There are indications that Near Eastern countries were too preoccupied with their own problems to be much concerned with the disarmament issue. The numerous abstentions in this area, and Egypt's support for the Soviet insistence on prior prohibition of atomic bombs, suggest the degree to which positions on this specific issue were determined by more basic foreign policy considerations.

The Indian attempt to connect disarmament with world economic development symptomized a widely held attitude among underdeveloped countries. At least one Latin American paper took the view that economic development is a more fruitful approach to world peace than disarmament. Although the Indian resolution on this subject was ultimately withdrawn (and was criticized in some Indian press circles as rash meddling likely to involve India in the East-West conflict), the Tripartite opposition to this scheme could well be interpreted in underdeveloped countries as belying the often-voiced U.S. desire to see resources transferred from armaments to peaceful construction. U.S. unwillingness at present to make any commitment on this heading in the United Nations should, therefore, be set down as a psychological liability in these areas of the world.

5. To deprive the Soviets of their near-monopoly on "peace" propaganda as an instrument of confusion, intimidation, etc.

Comment: Reactions to General Assembly proceedings up to date indicate that a useful beginning has been made in exploiting this opportunity. A significant amount of European press opinion, starting with

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the belief that U.S. intentions are genuinely peaceful, expressed relief that the West had at last seized the psychological initiative for peace and put the Soviets in the position of having to say "no." There is no question that Vishinsky's "laughter" speech was a major blunder, although its propaganda value to the West was reduced by the subsequent Soviet counterproposals and apparent concessions.

Two factors appear to have limited the degree of success in this field. The first, referred to in item 3 above, was the occasional tendency of U.S. spokesmen to condemn the Soviets and their proposals in conspicuously harsh terms, which lent credence in some quarters to the view that the U.S. was more concerned with making anti-Soviet propaganda than it was with furthering the cause of disarmament. The second factor, more difficult to deal with, was the Soviet concentration on the psychologically potent atomic bomb issue. It seems clear that the Tripartite resolution was psychologically correct in joining together the previously separate problems of atomic and conventional weapons; but some evidences of confusion on the atomic prohibition issue raised by the Soviets suggests that the Western powers have yet to overcome the terror value of atomic propaganda. Although press comment frequently showed appreciation of the counterbalancing threat of massed Soviet ground forces, it would seem that much remains to be done in the direction of convincing world opinion that "conventional" weapons are just as lethal and just as threatening to peace as atomic bombs.

6. By continuing to emphasize the necessity for genuine inspection and other safeguards, to prepare the way for their acceptance and the consequent relaxation of the iron curtain; and in the interim to focus attention on the menacing effect of the iron curtain on the prospects for peace.

Comment: In European press comment on the disarmament debate, the view was expressed a number of times that the Soviet political system makes it unthinkable that the Kremlin accept a genuine inspection system. The moral usually drawn was not that the Soviets have something to hide--this appeared to be taken for granted--but rather that the Tripartite

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proposal was unacceptable to the Soviets in one of its basic essentials and hence would not soon lead to real progress on disarmament.

Whether the disarmament proposal contains the possibility of disproving this pessimistic view and actually penetrating the iron curtain through inspection remains to be seen. Vishinsky's apparent concession on "continuous" inspection of atomic facilities was viewed in some European quarters as more than a propaganda stroke. It would seem worth while to consider the merits of an effort to obtain agreement on some form of limited inspection in advance of any commitment to disarm. Even if the present atmosphere of distrust precludes Soviet agreement on such a step, further exploitation of this issue would at least foster more widespread understanding of the fact that the Soviet-imposed iron curtain is the main cause of this distrust.

B. Dangers

1. To give the impression that the proposals are insincere and purely propagandistic.

Comment: As indicated in items 3 and 5 of the foregoing section, it appears that success in avoiding this danger has been by no means complete thus far. The "propaganda" interpretation of the Tripartite proposal seems to derive either from a belief that the timing was obviously inappropriate for real progress or from occasional statements or actions by U.S. spokesmen. It would appear, therefore, that the only sure means of overcoming this danger is to continue the effort long enough to show conclusively that it represents settled U.S. policy rather than opportunism; and to maintain a consistent attitude of moderation and patience which will build up credence for Western sincerity and properly highlight any manifestations of violence or negativism on the part of the Soviets.

2. To give the Soviets a renewed opportunity for a psychologically potent propaganda counteroffensive on the themes of "peace" and atomic weapons.

Comment: This would appear to be an unavoidable liability of the Tripartite initiative. As far as atomic propaganda is concerned,

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The degree to which this danger has materialized is discussed in item 5 of the foregoing section. However, one further comment must be made. The Tripartite approach has the psychological disadvantage of complexity. One London paper noted editorially that "the Western proposals, by trying to be realistic, became procedural and complicated, and hence infinitely less politically effective and dramatic than the Soviet amendment." It would appear that the problem of presenting the necessarily complex Western approach in terms that can compete psychologically with the specious Soviet approach constitutes one of the most difficult and most important psychological problems connected with the disarmament issue.

3. To give non-sponsors, especially countries not directly involved in the cold war, a feeling of being snubbed in a matter they consider to be of vital interest to themselves.

Comment: This potential danger would appear to have been largely obviated, at least temporarily, by the widely held appreciation that progress on disarmament must proceed from direct talks among the major military powers. Furthermore, Western promptness in accepting the initiative of Iraq, Pakistan and Syria for creation of a four-power subcommittee furnished substantial proof of our respect for the views of third parties, and contrasts favorably with Soviet insistence on a five-power peace pact and other tendencies on their part to insist on exclusive great-power dealing.

Some tendency emerged, nevertheless, to view the General Assembly proceedings as having degenerated into a propaganda slugging match between the U.S. and the USSR in which both parties ignored the third parties' vital interest in stopping a cold war not of their making. It would appear to be useful, therefore, to give continuing evidence of a concern for third-party interests and points of view.

4. To give the impression of offering a firm, final proposal whose rejection would hasten the onset of global war.

Comment: This danger would appear to have been avoided with virtually complete success up to date. Press comment, even when despairing of progress on disarmament or concluding that further Western rearmament is the only course, never referred to a Western ultimatum and seldom or never concluded that the General Assembly proceedings had hastened global war. However, it would seem important to have this danger continually in mind as negotiations proceed, particularly if a complete breakdown appears in the offing.

5. To allow the Soviets, by means of charges of U.S. hypocrisy and tempting counterproposals, to foster Western disunity and to retard or even destroy the effort to rearm.

Comment: It can be assumed that this represents one of the major Soviet objectives, if not their supreme objective, in the disarmament debate. No clear indication is at hand that the Soviets have met with material success in this effort. Indeed the conclusion was often drawn, especially in conservative and right-wing quarters, that the test of Soviet willingness had been made, that the negative result could have been predicted in advance, and that now clearly the only safe course was to spur rearmament. However, not all European opinion seems so impervious to Soviet tactics. The moderate left, especially in France, tended toward the view that while the remotest possibility of agreement remains every effort must be made to achieve it. While no explicit appeal was made to sacrifice rearmament to this end, the possibility remains that a series of tempting Soviet offers on disarmament might intensify anti-rearmament attitudes among large groups who are already emotionally inclined in that direction.

To counter this danger it would appear essential that the disarmament issue be presented consistently as a long-range proposition, necessarily dependent for solution on progress toward settlement of other major East-West issues. The current phase of negotiations would thus appear in the light of an effort to lay a sound foundation in the hope

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that general political conditions in the foreseeable future will make possible the raising of the actual structure. To permit the widespread growth of any immediate expectations for substantive disarmament would be tantamount to making a psychological commitment which could not be fulfilled without jeopardizing our security.

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PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGY BOARD
708 Jackson Place, N. W.
Washington 25, D. C.

25 January 1952

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General W. B. Smith


Subject: Study on the Effectiveness of the US-UK-French Disarmament
Proposal in the United Nations.

1. Forwarded herewith are copies of the PSB staff study on the
above subject for your information.

2. It is noted that this study does not attempt to gauge the effect
of the Western disarmament proposal on public opinion in the Soviet Union
and other Iron Curtain countries. Soviet propaganda treatment was as
over-whelmingly weighted in favor of the official Kremlin line as might
have been expected. However, it may be significant that occasional
editorialized excerpts from Western speeches and texts were included in
Pravda and in Moscow's radio output. This fact suggests the possibility
that penetration of the USSR on this subject by the Voice of America,
the United Nations radio, and other programs was sufficient to cause
concern to the Kremlin.

3. It is my opinion that this study may prove of considerable value
in assisting the United States to gain additional psychological effect
from a continuation of the disarmament theme. It is, therefore, recom-
mended that the PSB staff continue its evaluation of this program as it
develops and that further reports to the Board be made on a continuing
basis.

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Raymond B. Allen
Director

Enclosure: PSB D-20, Effectiveness of the US-UK-French Disarmament
Proposal in the United Nations.

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ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

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FROM:

PSB

NO.

DATE

TO	ROOM NO.	DATE		OFFICER'S INITIALS	COMMENTS
		REC'D	FWD'D		
1. <i>CPR/PY</i>	<i>30</i>				<i>Little Assembly of UN</i>
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PSB D-20

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2. Although follow-up efforts may help to produce a change in the Soviets' attitude, their reaction thus far gives no sign of increased readiness to relax tensions or to settle the armaments question or any other major issue. They appear to interpret the Tripartite proposal as an act of psychological warfare, not as evidence of Western peaceful intentions.

3. The disarmament proceedings were substantially effective in reassuring European opinion that the U.S. sincerely seeks security through reducing the arms burden; but a vocal minority, noting present world tensions and some harsh statements by U.S. representatives, concluded that the proposal was insincere.

4. A substantial beginning has been made in depriving the Soviets of their near-monopoly on "peace" propaganda. However, Soviet psychological tactics on the armaments question benefit by a simple approach, and one of our biggest problems of psychological tactics is to explain our complex proposals with dramatic effect. An important aspect of this problem, the need to nullify the terror value of Soviet atomic propaganda, has been partly but by no means fully solved by the joining of atomic and

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8. The defensive character of the Soviet refusal to accept genuine inspection and other safeguards can be exploited psychologically to gain acceptance for this aspect of the Western plan and to show the consequent necessity for a relaxation of the iron curtain. While actual penetration of the iron curtain through inspection seems most unlikely in the present atmosphere, it might be worth while with this end in view to explore the possibility of agreement on limited inspection without any prior commitment to disarm.

III. Discussion

This discussion is organized in terms of broad opportunities and dangers inherent in the disarmament proposal, with comments in each case as to the degree of success which appears to have been attained, or to be attainable, in exploiting the opportunities and averting the dangers.

A. Opportunities

1. To establish firmly a groundwork of principles and procedures for dependable world disarmament, on a

anticipation of material progress toward disarmament
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Comment: This opportunity was exploited psychologically to a significant extent by the creation of the Disarmament Commission with terms of reference substantially the same as those proposed in the original resolution. This step had the effect of fixing the United Nations as the proper forum for future action on disarmament and providing a visible entity (the Commission), to which the Soviets felt obliged to adhere despite their opposition on the issues, and to which the world will look for continuing efforts within the established terms of reference. The note of sincere purpose in the President's November 7 address, and the clarity of Secretary Acheson's detailed presentation before the Political Committee on November 19, were both effective in creating a general attitude of readiness (except in the Soviet bloc) to find substantial merit in the Tripartite proposal. However, in view of the keen interest and earnest hopes displayed in a great body of early press comment on the proposal, it seems likely that the groundwork which has been laid depends for its permanence on the degree to which great-power agreement to build on that groundwork is viewed as a realistic possibility. Continued great-power disagreement over two years or more might well force liquidation of the Commission or a shift to terms of reference less consonant with U.S. strategic interests.

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proposal was unacceptable to the Soviets in one of its basic essentials and hence would not soon lead to real progress on disarmament.

Whether the disarmament proposal contains the possibility of disproving this pessimistic view and actually penetrating the iron curtain through inspection remains to be seen. Vishinsky's apparent concession on "continuous" inspection of atomic facilities was viewed in some European quarters as more than a propaganda stroke. It would seem worth while to consider the merits of an effort to obtain agreement on some form of limited inspection in advance of any commitment to disarm. Even if the present atmosphere of distrust precludes Soviet agreement on such a step, further exploitation of this issue would at least foster more widespread understanding of the fact that the Soviet-imposed iron curtain is the main cause of this distrust.

B. Dangers

1. To give the impression that the proposals are insincere and purely propagandistic.

Comment: As indicated in items 3 and 5 of the foregoing section, it appears that success in avoiding this danger has been by no means complete thus far. The "propaganda" interpretation of the Tripartite proposal seems to derive either from a belief that the timing was obviously inappropriate for real progress or from occasional statements or actions by U.S. spokesmen. It would appear, therefore, that the only sure means of overcoming this danger is to continue the effort long enough to show conclusively that it represents settled U.S. policy rather than opportunism; and to maintain a consistent attitude of moderation and patience which will build up credence for Western sincerity and properly highlight any manifestations of violence or negativism on the part of the Soviets.

2. To give the Soviets a renewed opportunity for a psychologically potent propaganda counteroffensive on the themes of "peace" and atomic weapons.

Comment: This would appear to be an unavoidable liability of the Tripartite initiative. As far as atomic propaganda is concerned,

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the degree to which this danger has materialized is discussed in item 5 of the foregoing section. However, one further comment must be made. The Tripartite approach has the psychological disadvantage of complexity. One London paper noted editorially that "the Western proposals, by trying to be realistic, became procedural and complicated, and hence infinitely less politically effective and dramatic than the Soviet amendment." It would appear that the problem of presenting the necessarily complex Western approach in terms that can compete psychologically with the specious Soviet approach constitutes one of the most difficult and most important psychological problems connected with the disarmament issue.

3. To give non-sponsors, especially countries not directly involved in the cold war, a feeling of being snubbed in a matter they consider to be of vital interest to themselves.

Comment: This potential danger would appear to have been largely obviated, at least temporarily, by the widely held appreciation that progress on disarmament must proceed from direct talks among the major military powers. Furthermore, Western promptness in accepting the initiative of Iraq, Pakistan and Syria for creation of a four-power subcommittee furnished substantial proof of our respect for the views of third parties, and contrasts favorably with Soviet insistence on a five-power peace pact and other tendencies on their part to insist on exclusive great-power dealing.

Some tendency emerged, nevertheless, to view the General Assembly proceedings as having degenerated into a propaganda slugging match between the U.S. and the USSR in which both parties ignored the third parties' vital interest in stopping a cold war not of their making. It would appear to be useful, therefore, to give continuing evidence of a concern for third-party interests and points of view.

4. To give the impression of offering a firm, final proposal whose rejection would hasten the onset of global war.

Comment: This danger would appear to have been avoided with virtually complete success up to date. Press comment, even when despairing of progress on disarmament or concluding that further Western rearmament is the only course, never referred to a Western ultimatum and seldom or never concluded that the General Assembly proceedings had hastened global war. However, it would seem important to have this danger continually in mind as negotiations proceed, particularly if a complete breakdown appears in the offing.

5. To allow the Soviets, by means of charges of U.S. hypocrisy and tempting counterproposals, to foster Western disunity and to retard or even destroy the effort to rearm.

Comment: It can be assumed that this represents one of the major Soviet objectives, if not their supreme objective, in the disarmament debate. No clear indication is at hand that the Soviets have met with material success in this effort. Indeed the conclusion was often drawn, especially in conservative and right-wing quarters, that the test of Soviet willingness had been made, that the negative result could have been predicted in advance, and that now clearly the only safe course was to spur rearmament. However, not all European opinion seems so impervious to Soviet tactics. The moderate left, especially in France, tended toward the view that while the remotest possibility of agreement remains every effort must be made to achieve it. While no explicit appeal was made to sacrifice rearmament to this end, the possibility remains that a series of tempting Soviet offers on disarmament might intensify anti-rearmament attitudes among large groups who are already emotionally inclined in that direction.

To counter this danger it would appear essential that the disarmament issue be presented consistently as a long-range proposition, necessarily dependent for solution on progress toward settlement of other major East-West issues. The current phase of negotiations would thus appear in the light of an effort to lay a sound foundation in the hope

that general political conditions in the foreseeable future will make possible the raising of the actual structure. To permit the widespread growth of any immediate expectations for substantive disarmament would be tantamount to making a psychological commitment which could not be fulfilled without jeopardizing our security.